

Message Text

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FM USMISSION USBERLIN

TO AMEMBASSY BONN

INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USBERLIN 0030

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, WB, GW, UR

SUBJECT: SPEED SKATING CHAMPIONSHIPS IN BERLIN

REF: USBERLIN 11

1. SUMMARY: WHILE SENAT DECIDED JANUARY 6 NOT TO PROVIDE SOVIETS WITH SUPPLEMENTAL INVITATION TO SPEED SKATING CHAMPIONSHIPS, INDICATIONS ARE THAT PRESENT CONTROVERSY OVER THIS ISSUE AROSE AS RESULT OF MIS-UNDERSTANDING AND THAT SOVIETS MAY IN FACT BE SATISFIED WITH EXISTING INVITATION FORMULA AS BASIS FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION. END SUMMARY:

2. AS REPORTED IN LOCAL PRESS, BERLIN SENAT REACHED UNANIMOUS DECISION AT JANUARY 6 SESSION NOT TO ACCEDE TO SOVIET REQUEST FOR SUPPLEMENTAL SENAT INVITATION TO WORLD SPEED SKATING CHAMPIONSHIPS SCHEDULED TO BE HELD IN BERLIN MARCH 6-7. DESPITE ULTIMATE UNANIMITY THERE WAS APPARENTLY SPIRITED DEBATE OVER ISSUE WITHIN
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SENAT, WITH PROPONENTS OF HARD LINE--PRINCIPALLY

MAYOR OXFORD AND SENATOR KORBER (MEMBER OF PRESIDUM OF DEUTSCHE SPORTBUND)--WINNING OUT OVER THOSE WHO FAVORED SOME FORM OF COMPROMISE, SUCH AS LETTER OF GREETING FROM GOVERNING MAYOR, THAT WOULD ENSURE SOVIET PARTICIPATION. SENAT'S DECISION HAS GENERALLY BEEN APPLAUDED IN LOCAL EDITORIAL COMMENT AS NECESSARY STEP TO PREVENT SEPARATION OF BERLIN SPORTS ASSOCIATIONS FROM UMBRELLA SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS IN FRG.

3. REPRESENTATIVES OF SENAT CHANCELLERY AND DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND SPORTS PLAN TO MEET JANUARY 7 WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF BERLIN AND GERMAN SPORTS FEDERATIONS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION OF SITUATION. PROSPECTS FOR REVERSAL OF DECISION NOT TO EXTEND SUPPLEMENTAL INVITATION APPEAR SLIM, HOWEVER, SINCE SENAT REPRESENTATIVES HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN INSTRUCTED TO PRESENT NO RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION IN THIS FORUM, AND SINCE SPORTS FEDERATIONS INVOLVED HAVE ALREADY LET IT CLEARLY BE KNOWN THAT THEY REGARD EXISTING INVITATIONS AS ADEQUATE AND IN CONFORMITY WITH INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE. INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION AND GERMAN SPEED SKATING ASSOCIATION HAVE, BY LOCAL ACCOUNTS, ALREADY WRITTEN TO CORRESPONDING SOVIET BODIES TO REMIND THEM THAT THEY ALWAYS HAVE OPTION OF NOT PARTICIPATING IN CHAMPIONSHIPS.

4. WHILE SITUATION AS DESCRIBED IN PRESS WOULD THUS APPEAR TO BE CUT-AND-DRIED--WITH ATTENDANT IMPRESSION THAT SOVIET BLOC WILL WITHDRAW FROM CHAMPIONSHIPS--CERTAIN CONTRARY INDICATIONS HAVE COME TO OUR ATTENTION. IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT SOVIET "PROTEST" THAT PROMPTED PRESENT CONTROVERSY AND OBLIGED SENAT TO CONCERN ITSELF WITH ISSUE WAS NOT, AS SURMISED PARA 1, REFTTEL, BLINOV LETTER OF AUGUST 13 TO INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION, BUT RATHER TELEGRAM OF DECEMBER 10 ADDRESSED TO ORGANIZING COMMITTEE AT WILMERSDORF STADIUM IN BERLIN AND READING AS FOLLOWS (IN ORIGINAL ENGLISH): QUOTE: CONNECTION HOLDING WORLD SPRINT CHAMPIONSHIPS FOR LADIES AND MEN IN WEST BERLIN USSR SKATING FEDERATION ASKS TO SEND OFFICIAL INVITATION FROM WEST
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BERLIN SENATE AND CORRESPONDING HOSTING ASSOCIATION. REGARDS, USSR SKATING FEDERATION. UNQUOTE: HEAD OF SENAT CHANCELLERY HERZ HAS INFORMED ALLIED MISSIONS THAT MINISTER TOKOVININ OF SOVIET EMBASSY BONN EXPLAINED ON DECEMBER 18 TO MEYER-LANDRUT OF FOROFF THAT THIS TELEGRAM HAD BEEN BASED ON MISUNDERSTANDING AND THAT SOVIETS WERE NOT IN FACT INSISTING THAT THERE BE TWO LOCAL INVITATIONS. (COMMENT: WE TAKE

THIS TO MEAN THAT SOVIETS REGARDED MENTION OF BERLIN ICE SPORTS UNION IN INVITATION FORMULA GIVEN PARA 3, REFTEL, AS SUFFICIENT AND WERE NOT INSISTING ON PARALLEL INVITATION FROM SENAT.) MOREOVER, REFERENCE WAS MADE BY HERZ IN THIS CONNECTIONS TO SO-CALLED "EXPERTS" UNDERSTANDING" REACHED BETWEEN COMPETENT DIVISION CHIEFS IN FRG AND SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTRIES ON OCTOBER 16/17, 1973, WHICH IS REPUTED TO HAVE MADE PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL EVENTS IN BERLIN PALATABLE TO SOVIETS AND ON WHICH PRESENT INVITATION FORMULA FOR SKATING CHAMPIONSHIPS WAS APPARENTLY BASED. MISSION WAS PREVIOUSLY UNAWARE OF EXISTENCE OF ANY SUCH UNDERSTANDING, WHICH WE PRESUME IS SAME "WORKING-LEVEL" ARRANGEMENT TO WHICH FEDERAL PRESS SPOKESMAN GRUENEWALD REFERRED ON JANUARY 5. (COMMENT: WE ARE AT LOSS IN ANY CASE TO EXPLAIN WHY SOVIETS NONETHELESS BOYCOTTED BERLIN GYMNAESTRADA IN JULY 1975.) AS FINAL INDICATION THAT SITUATION IS NOT AS CUT-AND-DRIED AS IT SEEMS, WE WOULD CITE BEWILDERMENT THAT SOVIET CONSUL GENERAL SHARKOV EVINced IN CONVERSATION WITH HERZ ON SUBJECT ON JANUARY 5. HERZ REPORTED THAT SHARKOV HAD PROFESSED NOT TO KNOW OF SOVIET SKATING FEDERATION'S TELEGRAM OF DECEMBER 10, AND THAT HE HAD REQUESTED HERZ NOT TO TAKE ANY DECISIONS BEFORE HE HAD OPPORTUNITY TO CHECK WITH MOSCOW. SHARKOV OPINED THAT IN EVENT MISUNDERSTANDING HAD OCCURRED, MATTER COULD DOUBTLESS BE EASILY RESOLVED.

5. OUR CONCLUSION, THEN, IS THAT THERE IS POSSIBILITY THAT PUBLIC FUROR OVER SUPPLEMENTAL INVITATION MAY HAVE BEEN FOR NOTHING AND THAT DESPITE TELEGRAM FROM USSR SKATING FEDERATION, SOVIETS MAY IN FACT HAVE PLANNED ALL ALONG TO PARTICIPATE IN SPEED SKATING
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CHAMPIONSHIPS ON BASIS OF EXISTING INVITATION FORMULA. WE WILL IN ANY EVENT QUESTION HERZ AS TO OUTCOME OF ANY FURTHERCONTACTS HE MAY HAVE WITH SOVIET CONSUL GENERAL ON SUBJECT. ACCORDING TO HERZ, SHARKOV DID NOT RAISE QA IN CONNECTION WITH SPEED SKATING IMBROGLIO BUT HIS DEPUTY, KOSOBRODOV, TOLD SPRINGER PRESS ON JANUARY 5 THAT DUAL INVITATIONS WOULD BE IN KEEPING WITH QA. BRITISH POLAD WILL REMIND SOVIET EMBASSY COUNSELOR KHOTULEV AT NEXT OPPORTUNITY THAT SOVIET CONSULATE GENERAL OFFICIALS HAVE NO COMPETENCE FOR QA MATTERS. GEORGE

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